

In addition, the U.S. labor force participation rate is at its lowest point in 36 years. Not since the days of Jimmy Carter has such a low percentage of Americans been in the workforce.

In fact, another shocking headline: Over 800,000 Americans dropped out of the labor force last month alone. Let me say that again. Over 800,000 Americans dropped out of the labor force in just 1 month—800,000. That is enough people to fill Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, home of Super Bowl XLVI and the Indianapolis Colts, one dozen times.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics calls many of these 800,000 “discouraged workers,” and they join over one-third of all working-age Americans no longer seeking work. It is not only those who are earnestly out there every day trying to find a job, any job, this is a staggering number of people who have simply given up, saying: It is not worth the effort; I can’t find a job; the jobs simply are not there.

Even those young Americans starting their careers, just entering the workforce, are not entering at the traditional level, the level which they are qualified for, have trained for or have been educated for. They are being forced to accept positions that they are overqualified for at wages way below what they expected to make after all their efforts preparing themselves through education and skills training to join the labor force in America.

Given years of growth at half the expected level and high unemployment, it is not surprising but it is very disheartening to hear this news continue well into the fifth year after the recession. But rather than point fingers or assign blame, I am here today to seek, hopefully, a consensus that the Senate needs to propose, needs to debate, and needs to support measures that will increase economic growth and provide economic opportunity for those who are seeking to join the labor force.

It is time for us to start talking about maximizing opportunity. Webster’s dictionary defines opportunity as “a good chance for advancement or progress.” That is what American workers at all levels of skill and income deserve, but many of us have introduced our own ideas about job creation and economic growth.

Earlier this year I put forward a detailed 10-point plan that I call The Indiana Way. Based on stories and suggestions from Hoosiers, these are commonsense solutions to some of our Nation’s biggest problems. Many of my proposals incorporate ideas that have gained bipartisan support.

We are not in the Senate arguing against each other, we are trying to find solutions, proposals, to debate together, to support together, and to move this country forward.

The Indiana Way includes commonsense proposals to reform our broken Tax Code, reduce regulations that are crippling industries and business, unlock American energy sources, and

support community banks, credit unions, and those who are providing the tools for investment and the tools for growth.

I welcome the chance to discuss how these ideas will help Hoosiers and Americans who are struggling in this economy, and I know many of my colleagues are also eager for the opportunity to discuss and debate real solutions to help our workforce. There are a number of proposals that have been brought to this floor by my colleagues.

Senator PORTMAN, who sits at a desk next to me, and others have put forward meaningful proposals we ought to be debating. We shouldn’t be talking about: Well, nothing is going to get done because it is an election year.

We ought to set that aside and say for the sake of the future of this country and for all of those seeking work and don’t have it, let’s debate the real issues. Let’s work together to pass something that will make our country stronger and our economy better.

It was one of my former colleagues and friend Jack Kemp who once said:

Our goals for this nation must be nothing less than to double the size of our economy and bring prosperity and jobs, ownership and equality of opportunity to all Americans, especially those living in our nation’s pockets of poverty—

And especially those who are earnestly seeking work and simply can’t find it. Today that goal remains worthy of our time and efforts. Let’s join together and have a conversation about real solutions that will make our country stronger, improve the lives of all American citizens, and build a better future for the next generation. This should be our goal. This is the goal that should unite us, and it is long past time for us to get serious about it and take action.

With that, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

ENERGY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, all year I have been coming to the floor to urge Senate Democrats to work with us to help the middle class. So far they haven’t seemed too serious about it. We saw that last week when they insisted on pushing legislation that could cost—not create but cost—up to 1 million jobs. Seventeen thousand of those jobs would be lost in Kentucky alone.

I am hoping Senate Democrats are finally willing to turn the page. I am

hoping they are finally willing to get serious about helping the middle class, because if they are, here is the energy debate we should be having right here this week: We should be having a debate about how to develop policies that can actually lead to lower utility bills for squeezed families, policies that can put people back to work in America’s coal country, policies that can help the kind of well-paying jobs our constituents want and deserve, and policies that can lead to a more effective use of North American energy supplies, that can help stabilize the world at a time when energy has become a weapon of states that do not hold our interests at heart.

Middle-class Americans struggle every day just to make ends meet. For many, the rising cost of energy is a big part of that. The price of electricity has been rising over the last decade, jumping by double digits in many States, and that is even after adjusting for inflation.

So it is unacceptable that it has been 7 years since we have had a real debate about energy jobs, energy independence, and energy security in the Democratically led Senate.

Republicans have a lot of good ideas about ways to help alleviate pressure on the middle class, and we have good ideas about how to create new opportunities through the use of our country’s abundant energy supplies. I am sure our Democratic friends have some good ideas, too, and we would all love to hear them because these days we haven’t heard a lot of serious energy talk from our friends on the other side.

We haven’t heard many concrete Democratic proposals that would effectively alleviate the real concerns and anxieties and stresses that my constituents and theirs deal with on an everyday basis. That is what we would like to hear from them this week, and that is what the American people deserve to hear.

We know Washington Democrats tried and failed to push a national energy tax—cap and trade—through Congress back when they had complete control of Washington. We know President Obama hasn’t given up on that idea, even after the people’s representatives refused to go along with it—in a Congress that was controlled entirely by his party.

That is why we see the Obama administration trying to do an end run around Congress to get what it wants: to impose through the bureaucracy massive new regulations that would make things even harder for already squeezed middle-class families.

So what Republicans are saying is this: Our constituents deserve a voice in what Washington Democrats are planning to do up because they are the ones whose lives and livelihoods will be most affected by these decisions, and through legislation this very week our constituents should be able to weigh in on these kinds of Democratic plans.

For instance, my constituents in Kentucky should be able to weigh in on